

## ◆ One Washington: Bridging the gap between urban areas and the rest of us

**It's a tale of two states.** Seattle and its suburbs are doing very well, what with their small unemployment rate and their big business profit and all. But out here on the coast (and in other parts of rural Washington), it's a different picture.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that having "two Washingtons" doesn't cut it.

**We continued to press for rural development this session. It's not too much to ask for policies that create jobs and provide incentives for businesses in our communities outside "Pugetropolis."** Job-creation and business incentives represent priority No. 1 for a great many families who call rural Washington home.

## ◆ Pivotal rural infrastructure

What does a prospective new business look for when it's on the hunt for new locations? And what does an existing business look for when it's trying to decide whether to expand — or to even stay open?

**We're convinced that a community's infrastructure — the system of roads and bridges, and water and sewer systems — plays a big part in the company's decision-making.**

A significant new direction we steer will help rural communities make improvements in their infrastructure.

The new policy allows them to retain twice as much of their sales-tax revenue — rather than send it to state coffers. Rural areas can then strengthen their railroad and port facilities, as well as other parts of their infrastructure. Further, legislation we passed this year offers a boost for help-desk and other high-tech companies that launch operations in rural areas.

These businesses provide software-installation, maintenance, troubleshooting, training and other types of services demanded by new technology. **Tax incentives will encourage these high-tech companies to give rural Washington a try.**

## ◆ Fair laws for contractors

We continued work on policies protecting Washington workers and businesses from one-sided competition with firms located across the Columbia River. Legislation we



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approved last year was a good first step to level the playing field for Washington companies. This year, we expanded the law to cover all out-of-state firms — not just contractors.

The law involves reciprocity in workers' compensation rules. Before last year's law, a company with this coverage in its home state could do business here without purchasing our state's insurance. But not so for Washington companies. If they wanted to do business elsewhere, they had to buy workers' compensation in the other state, too! But the new law requires out-of-state firms to buy our coverage — unless their home state signs a reciprocity agreement with us.

Sadly, we failed to find a compromise to extend the Timber Retraining Benefits Program for newly unemployed workers past its June 30th expiration date. The governor has said that he may call us back into a brief special session to try to reach an agreement on the program's future. **We certainly hope to!**

## ◆ Fish and timber: Seeking solutions that will work for all parties involved

It's crystal clear that our interests are interconnected in the work to bring fish back to Washington waters. We can't — and we won't! — write a plan that unfairly hits

any one group of citizens or businesses. **Everyone has a stake in this recovery work, and no one should take an unequal share of the burden.**

Most every part of our state — including our Southwest Washington region and, yes, including the urban area around Puget Sound — is affected by the fish listings in the federal Endangered Species Act.

This year, we approved funds and policies that will, among other things, focus on: removing barriers to fish passage, restoring habitat, encouraging local and volunteer fish-recovery activities, buying back commercial-fishing licenses, and rehiring enforcement officers.

## ◆ Reasonable forest policies

The forest-products industry and smaller, private timberland owners joined representatives from local, state and federal governments and the tribes in building a timber plan to support salmon recovery. The new forest-practices policy includes several essential elements:

- Help for small timberland owners in keeping their property forested — rather than turning it over to some other use — to maintain habitat.
- Reasonable buffers along streamsides and limited timber harvest along steep slopes to protect fish streams.
- Better maintenance of logging roads to curtail devastating runoff.

- Purchase of riparian easements from small landowners to improve fish migration.

**We must always emphasize a duty to make sure the timber industry has a solid future.**

## ◆ Landslides: Searching for assistance for Aldercrest neighborhood victims

Although our House Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee endorsed help for the Aldercrest landslide victims, the proposal didn't win in the full House. Our plan would encourage banks to forgive all or at least part of the principal balance on loans to victims, and we will continue working on it.

## ◆ Private wells: Opposing plans that would place meters or impose taxes

Many people in our district and across the state have been very concerned — and rightly so! — at the suggestion that meters might be placed on private wells.

**We certainly understand why people have been so strident in voicing their opposition to this idea. And we agree. We do not support any such plan.** And we

have no reason to suspect that anybody who does support it will be able to convince a majority of legislators to go along with them.

## ◆ Shorelines: Putting the kibosh on unnecessary state regulations

**How can we ever be "One Washington" featuring equal opportunity if a state agency's double standard is throttling rural development?** That's what we've been asking in response to Department of Ecology shoreline-management proposals that we believe jeopardize the survival of working families and the development of new businesses.

The department is running full speed ahead — never mind the real-world consequences for real-world people — to force new shoreline master plans on many of our local communities. They may be talking about stopping development in some cases so far away from a shoreline that it might not be possible to generate the kind of business development we need on the coast. Dairy farmers face some of the most severe threats in the department's proposals.

**We will continue working for legislation to slow the department down and make them see that the public needs and deserves a chance to speak.**

**The fact is that the cleanest water in Washington is in our timber and fishing communities.** People in our towns and other rural regions have always had an obvious and natural incentive to respect and protect the environment.

While we do have serious environmental problems, they're not in rural Washington — the most severe problems are in urban areas.

Many of our economic-development ideas on the coast — the long-proposed convention center in Long Beach, for instance — depend on shoreline activity.

Some progress is being made in convincing the department to consider public comment before adopting new shoreline rules. We received a letter from the department saying that more public comment will be taken. But we'll keep an eye on these proposals.

## ◆ Public safety: Continuing work to improve peace of mind for our families

We won support this year for voluntary, up-to-date training for all firefighters. Regional facilities for training and education will be set up so that local firefighters can more conveniently participate.

**The firefighter-training program emphasizes skills in fire suppression, prevention, inspection, investigation — and regular assessment of capabilities.**

The measure also increases volunteer-firefighter pensions — only the second such increase since the early 1980s. The maximum pension for retired firefighters, for example, will go from \$225 to \$280 a year.

(You might be interested in knowing, by the way, that 72 percent of the state's 23,000 firefighters are volunteers. The Washington State Patrol estimates that 20 percent of these volunteers haven't yet received appropriate training.)

## ◆ Supervision of convicts

Tighter supervision of post-release felons is established in another new policy. The felons who have served their time will be watched more closely.

**We want to make sure they don't slip up and slip back into old habits that got them in trouble in the first place.**



## 19th District News

### ◆ Transportation: Keying economic development and freight mobility in new road plan

Our new transportation budget supports economic development in Southwest Washington and in our state's other rural communities.

We put emphasis on freight mobility — on the ability of farmers and other businesses to get goods and products to ports and other destinations. Another budget highlight involves our salmon-restoration efforts, such as removing fish barriers and managing storm-water runoff.

### ◆ Longview's Rail Corridor project

Regional projects addressed in the transportation budget include funds to spur the Alternative Rail Corridor project for the Port of Longview. The rail corridor just might clear the way for construction of a grain-export facility and provide additional rail service for existing port businesses.

**We need to increase rail capacity so Longview can successfully compete with other regions.**

Most of the business expansion and development in Cowlitz County would see direct benefits from the rail corridor. The proposal would mean a great deal, for example, to International Paper, Barlow Point and the Mint Farm Industrial Park. Truck access to the industrial area could be improved, and the rail corridor would also reduce traffic congestion for industrial workers and other residents in the area.

Additional transportation-budget funds will go toward helping projects such as:

- Safety work on State Route 101 in the Naselle area.
- Replacement of the Allen Street Bridge in Longview and Kelso.
- Stabilization of a rockfall along State Route 4 near Mill Creek.
- Replacing the bridge on State Route 6 east of Menlo.
- Retrofitting the Wishkah Street, Heron Street and Chehalis River bridges in Aberdeen.
- Resurfacing State Routes 4 and 6 south from Raymond.
- Replacing the Bone River Bridge west of South Bend.

### ◆ Education: Making strong schools a pivotal investment we all share in the future

**After the love and support we give our kids at home, few things rank up there with the education we provide them at school — whether it's in a private school or in a public school, or in the individual instruction some of us provide on a regular basis at home.** That's such a fundamental plank for the foundation of our families and society!

The new budget reflects our duty to provide young people the education they need for the coming century. Our emphasis on reading, math and other basics is renewed, and we've bolstered both the Reading Corps and the Learning Assistance Program. We also boost emphasis on school-accountability, mathematics, reading,

## Representative Brian Hatfield • Representative Mark Doumit

K-12 technology and help for struggling students. Further, we put extra attention on school safety and on dealing with disruptive students **because other kids shouldn't have to put up with unruly classrooms.**

Responsible funding for our schools includes decent salaries and compensation. The new budget provides across-the-board raises for state workers, including teachers and other school employees. **A specific direction aims to attract high-quality new teachers and keep high-quality veteran teachers.**

We also put money in the budget for a more substantial piece of what's called "levy equalization" for rural and small-town school districts. **As we've said before, rural taxpayers are often called upon to pay a larger percentage of their local school bills.** (That's because most urban and suburban school districts have more businesses to help out.) The new state budget kicks in additional money for many of our coastal and other Southwest Washington school districts. Also, we increased the state share of school-construction funding to take some of the burden off local taxpayers.



*A good education is so important for our children's future – and their children's future.*



*We joined the governor in a bill-signing ceremony for our legislation to make it easier for salmon trollers to get their catch to Washington ports and markets.*

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## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# 19th District News

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### Dear Friends:

We're proud to share this report on the 1999 legislative sessions. Disagreements on a few important items kept us here longer than expected, but it's been a productive meeting for Southwest Washington and for our state as a whole.

As always, it is a great honor to represent our Wahkiakum, Pacific, Cowlitz and Grays Harbor counties in your state Legislature. We have received a great many letters, phone calls and visits from 19th Legislative District citizens. **It is very important for individuals and families to stay in touch with us — that's what makes our democracy work!**

The Legislature this year tackled matters that — one way or another — impact every citizen. You've probably seen newspaper and TV accounts or heard radio stories about the bickering in Olympia. Yes, it wasn't always what you'd call a "love fest." **But we did reach agreement on a lot of things (and we discussed a lot of other things) that didn't show up on the "Front Page" or the "Evening News."**

This edition of **19th District News** explores issues of importance for coastal and other Southwest Washington families. Our report details concerns that have been and will always be uppermost in kitchen-table conversations of real people:

• **One Washington.** We keep reminding our city and suburban colleagues that rural and small-town Washington deserves a piece of the economic pie Puget Sound has been gnawing on for years.

• **Fish and timber.** Just getting everyone to sit down at the same negotiating table is a big win in this discussion. **Our salmon-recovery effort must be thorough and fair for everyone involved.**

• **Public safety.** When it comes to security and peace of mind, fire safety is as important as anything else. **People have a right to feel safe in their homes, on their streets, and around their communities.**

Today's report looks at several other concerns, too. Thanks very much for your time and interest.

Best wishes,

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